

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2014

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Mike Troutman, Chairperson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

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| Members Present: | Jim Hopkins | Bruce Phillips |
| | Kaytee Faris | Mike Troutman |
| | Eric Greene | Susan Baldwin, City Commission Liaison |

Members Excused: Dan Buscher and Kim Tuck

Staff Present: Christine Hilton, Planning Supervisor
Marcel Stoetzel, Assistant City Attorney
Glenn Perian, Senior Planner, Planning Dept.
Leona Parrish, Admin. Assistant, Planning Dept.

ADDITIONS / DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES: Correction was noted on page 2, 1st sentence; the word “square” should be removed and should read “total footage of fencing”.

MOTION MADE BY MR. ERIC GREENE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE APRIL 14, 2014 HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING WITH THE CORRECTION NOTED, SECONDED BY MR. BRUCE PHILLIPS.

ALL IN FAVOR; NONE OPPOSED; MINUTES APPROVED

CORRESPONDENCE: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

A) **200 Capital Avenue, N.E.** - (*Request from Dr. Gregory D. Dotson, for a Notice to Proceed to demolish the detached garage.*)

Dr. Dotson was present to speak regarding his request for a Notice to Proceed to demolish his detached garage. Stated it is currently in violation of code and would be costly to repair as it is in ruins currently and not safe for entry. Stated he was talking to a city employee that stated it might be less expensive to demolish than to put on a new roof. Noted the meeting packet needs a correction as his property is now for sale and he would like to leave the cement slab foundation so the new owners may build a new garage on the old foundation.

Mr. Mike Troutman asked how long he has owned this property and what was the condition of the garage when purchased. Dr. Dotson stated he purchased it late in the fall of 1995 and occupied it in January 1996; stated the previous owners had issues with the electric when he bought the property and had planned to use as an in-house office; there was an attempt to have an apartment upstairs and found it was not properly insulated and the water pipes had broken in the basement area and discovered from the neighbors this had also happened in the past.

Mr. Mike Troutman asked if when purchased was he aware it had an historic neighborhood significance. Dr. Dotson stated yes he is from the Battle Creek area and they had invested \$40,000 dollars on repairs on the home and is bothered with the current condition of the property; have had financial hardships with a business partnership and filed bankruptcy and had to bail their home out from foreclosure twice and is needing to get the property up to code and does not have the means. Stated a builder said it would be more costly to repair than to demolish and that he is still looking to receive quotes for demolition and that the utilities have been gone for years with no water also.

Mr. Bruce Phillips stated he has been aware of this property for years and noted it was in bad condition when Dr. Dotson had purchased. Stated he liked the carriage house to be left, but the garage did take-up a large portion of the lot and if demolished it would increase the yard size for that property for someone if they were to buy it for a home and not an office. Stated in its present condition it does not add any value to the home and the cost to renovate is like anything else, where do you start and when do you stop.

Mr. Mike Troutman asked Dr. Dotson if there was anything he could have done to do repairs since he purchased in 1995-1996. Dr. Dotson stated it is brick exterior and poorly insulated and could only use the structure for 6-months due to the air coming inside. Said he feels bad for the neighbors having to look at the condition of the garage for many years and that the apartment upstairs having no insulation he gave up on repairs as it was in such bad condition and even if a new roof was put on, it would have only camouflaged what was bad underneath.

Mr. Eric Greene asked if he had spoken to the neighbors. Dr. Dotson stated there had been different neighbors and knows the current ones well enough to wave hello, but had not spoken to them. Said it is an eye sore and a hazard and would like to have it removed and leave just the cement slab and is asking the commission for their approval.

Ms. Kaytee Faris asked what would be the itemized cost for repair estimate and is the estimate submitted for restoring it to the point of occupancy. Dr. Dotson stated it was to bring it back to its historic perspective of what it had been with the tin roof, staircase and fixtures and would be costly to bring it up to its natural state inside and out.

Mr. Troutman asked if there was a cost for repair for just the exterior as the commission does not get involved in the interior. Dr. Dotson stated it would be \$6,000 dollars for the roof repair as it is all brick and has the doors and windows that are functional.

Mr. Eric Greene noted that the building inspector states a cost of repair is \$44,000 dollars. Dr. Dotson stated he is still waiting for some additional repair estimates and has someone who is currently looking for financing to purchase this property, and being the current owner he needs to get the code issues address for the garage.

Mr. Glenn Perian stated he had spoken with the city's building inspector and the cost of \$44,000 dollars was his estimate to get this building into a condition that would alleviate all the violations and bring the building into compliance with code.

Mr. Jim Hopkins asked Mr. Perian if that is what would be necessary. Mr. Perian stated that is the necessary work that he would be required to come into compliance with the building code. Mr. Hopkins stated his concern is he sees a beautiful building and also being a carriage house as there are not many left. Stated it is a fine example of what a carriage house was at a certain point in time and thinks that is the whole premise of an historic district and is uncomfortable with a Notice to Proceed. Dr. Dotson stated if he just put a roof on it, it would not still be safe to occupy as the apartment above the garage is not livable. Mr. Hopkins asked why it cannot be used as a garage only and make the repairs on the roof for the \$6,000 dollars. Said it does not need to be habitable.

Mr. Hopkins asked Dr. Dotson if he was leveraging the tax credits for renovations. Dr. Dotson stated there was no current business in the home any longer as of the year 2006. Dr. Dotson states he would agree to do whatever needs to be done and if it is just the roof for a feasible amount and appease Code Compliance.

Mr. Glenn Perian stated he would like to caution the commission that he does not believe that the \$6,000 dollars will cover the violations with the building (roof); although the Building Inspector is going to require other items to be done such as the floor that is open to the basement, etc. Stated he does not want them to think that just a roof is going to satisfy the violations associated with the building that the Building Inspector is going to require to be done.

Mr. Michael Troutman asked staff when this property became a part of the Historic District and if it had been before 1995 when Dr. Dotson purchased. Ms. Christine Hilton stated she was not aware of the exact year; but that Dr. Dotson came before the Historic District in 1997 for improvements done to the exterior. Stated the Historic District was originally established in the early 1980's and had some amendments done in the late 1980's.

Ms. Kaytee Faris stated it is a unique building, a real gem and have few left in the neighborhood and thinks it is their job to help preserve this building. Said the \$44,000 to save this building; thinking the cost of demolition plus the cost to rebuild would equal the same amount to build a new garage as compared to demolition. Dr. Dotson stated the only reason the cost of demolition option came up is when he met with the city official and attorney and they mentioned it in conversation that the demolition would be an option and he would entertain that option as it needs to be addressed by September.

Mr. Hopkins asked what is this building going to be brought up to code for; people or vehicles and if it were for vehicles it would seem it would not be as expensive of a process and believe it would still be expensive. Dr. Dotson stated it would be a 3 car garage and the floor that was mentioned is approximately 5 ft. on the north end with utility rooms that have holes in the floor where he believes the sub floor boards can be replaced inexpensively. Said that would be something he could do, but is not sure what would be allowed. Stated he has prospective buyers that went for financing 3-weeks ago and they are aware of the garage needing to be addressed for violation issues.

Ms. Susan Baldwin asked what would its' worth be as a garage if you cannot use it as such as it would be useless; stated she had concerns with it being adjacent to the easement and forcing

someone to repair a building that would be useless and/or something that might not be allowed by zoning or code to be made into living space.

Mr. Bruce Phillips stated the mortgage company is encumbered and would need to release from them to remove the garage which may or may not affect the value of what is owed to them; also the garage would need interior repair issues such as electric work and joist repaired to bring it up to code, etc. How much can you encumber a property owner for repairs when it was already in bad shape when purchased and noted he is in favor of demolishing or if the city allows it to be used as just a garage.

Mr. Mike Troutman stated he would not want to approve demolishing and then find it could have been repaired and feels they need more information to look at the costs and does not think \$6,000 dollars to repair the roof will be enough to save it and feel that the \$200,000 quote is too high. Said they need to look at it as the historic building that it is and not the economic impact.

Mr. Bruce Phillips asked if they could get another quote for just a garage roof repair in writing and then meet with the building inspector for the work needing to be done and come back to the commission with those quotes. Dr. Dotson stated he could have those bids by the next meeting in July.

Mr. Troutman stated if they were to vote today he would vote no to allow it to be demolished.

Mr. Jim Hopkins said they need the dimensions of the garage to see what the width and size are of the garage doors as they look small. Dr. Dotson stated the doors are wide and are heavy on rollers and is larger than most 3 car garages and that cars would fit inside. Stated he would agree to get more accurate numbers and information and come back in July.

With no others wishing to speak, Chairperson, Mr. Troutman asked commissioners for any action to be taken.

MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. ERIC GREENE TO POSTPONE ACTION ON THIS REQUEST AND TABLE THE REQUEST FOR THE NOTICE TO PROCEED TO DEMOLISH GARAGE TO ALLOW FOR ADDITIONAL REPAIR QUOTES TO BE SUBMITTED AT THE NEXT MEETING FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 200 CAPITAL AVENUE, N.E.; SECONDED BY MS. KAYTEE FARIS.

Discussion: None

ALL IN FAVOR; NONE OPPOSED; MOTION APPROVED

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS AND STAFF:

Mr. Bruce Phillips asked staff for information regarding the Heritage Tower building; said he had recently discovered that it went through a foreclosure, the owner is in Florida and that it was a Grand Rapids firm who had approached this commission four-months ago to demolish 17 W. Michigan Avenue. Stated it was his understanding that they went through the foreclosure process

to clear all the liens against the building so they could move forward with their development and now after the Kellogg announcement they are not as excited about moving forward; asked where 17 W. Michigan is regarding the demolition; who was the owner and what is happening with the Heritage Tower. Ms. Christine Hilton stated she understands that 269 Development out of Grand Rapids were waiting for all the liens to get cleared up through the foreclosure process and are still actively seeking purchase of both buildings. Said that 17 W. Michigan Avenue had received approval for a Notice to Proceed for demolition and that there was a condition on that approval for demolition that it is in conjunction with the development of the Heritage Tower Building.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Mike Troutman, Chair adjourned meeting at 4: 40 P.M.

Submitted by: Leona A. Parrish, Administrative Assistant, Planning Department